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Security Council

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Letter dated 16 March 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter dated 16 March 2015 from the representative of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Alya Ahmed S. **Al-Thani**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 16 March 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

This month, the crisis in Syria marked a sombre milestone: four years have now passed since the start of the Syrian revolution. Our peaceful calls for freedom and equality have been met with indiscriminate force by Assad's forces. In the past four years, Assad has systematically increased the scale and scope of his violence: heavy artillery, cluster munitions, chemical weapons and barrel bombs have killed more than 220,000 of my compatriots. The Assad regime has displaced more than half of our citizens and tortured tens of thousands of innocent people — over 11,000 of whom to death, as documented by the Caesar Exhibit currently on display at United Nations Headquarters.

Assad's forces bear the overwhelming responsibility for the war crimes committed in Syria. The Syrian Network for Human Rights estimates that more than 93 per cent of civilian deaths are caused by Assad's forces and pro-regime militias. Physicians for Human Rights has found that Syrian regime forces are responsible for 97 per cent of medical personnel deaths throughout the past four years and 88 per cent of deliberate and indiscriminate attacks on medical facilities. And the Secretary-General has, in his reports to the Security Council, shown that, of Syria's 212,000 besieged citizens, 87 per cent are in areas besieged by regime forces and militias (S/2015/124).

Assad's forces have targeted Syrian civilians using barrel bombs and chemical weapons, as confirmed by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (see A/HRC/28/69). They have also incubated the terrorist extremist threat now rife throughout Syria. The devastation caused by Assad's brutality has fuelled the proliferation of terrorist extremists and turned Syria into a base from which twisted extremist groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Al-Nusra can terrorize civilians in neighbouring Iraq, the region and beyond. Assad has also purposefully facilitated the rise of ISIL by buying its stolen oil and putting money in its coffers. ISIL and the regime have strategically avoided one another in the battlefield: just 6 per cent of the regime's so-called "counter-terrorism" operations have targeted ISIL and just 13 per cent of ISIL attacks have targeted Syrian security forces.

Terrorists like ISIL and tyrants like Assad are intimately interlinked: ISIL takes advantage of Assad and Assad takes advantage of ISIL. Both must be defeated and both must be held accountable for their crimes. The Security Council has repeatedly condemned the widespread violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed by Syrian regime forces, including in its resolutions 2118 (2013), 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2209 (2015). It has also condemned ISIL and Al-Qaida atrocities, including in its resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015).

Despite the 11 resolutions that the Security Council has adopted in relation to the situation in Syria during the past four years, the crisis in Syria has continued to worsen. Seventy-six thousand more people have died in the past 12 months. Needs are up by nearly a third. More than 1 million more children have been displaced during the past year. And two thirds of all Syrians inside the country are now in desperate need of emergency assistance.

The status quo is not working. The Security Council — and the world — is failing the Syrian people. Existing Council resolutions are not being enforced, to devastating effect: monthly casualty figures show that the Council's action has not even slowed the death rate. Resolution 2118 (2013) may have reduced the number of chemical weapons. But the regime is still using them. And it is still killing with other weapons. The Council's failure to take meaningful, enforced action is costing Syrian lives.

To stop the slaughter in Syria and bring about the political transition set out in the Geneva communiqué, the world must act decisively to defeat ISIL and its root cause — the Assad regime. On behalf of the Syrian people and my colleagues in the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, I therefore ask that you:

- **Adopt a comprehensive solution to the conflict in Syria** that is capable of both destroying the terrorist extremist threat and creating the conditions needed to force Assad to the negotiating table. Only a comprehensive and intensive effort to defeat ISIL and its root cause — the Assad regime — will effectively degrade and destroy groups like ISIL and lead to the peace and prosperity the Syrian people deserve.

- **Sanction** the individuals and companies that support Assad's killing machine. The Security Council has adopted strong, clear measures prohibiting the provision of oil exports, ransom payments and external donations to ISIL. Similar provisions should be adopted to sanction those who aid and abet Assad.

- **Protect Syrians inside Syria** by establishing a safe zone. Assad's aerial bombardment has already taken the lives of too many civilians. By authorizing a safe zone inside Syrian territory, thousands of Syrian lives would be saved and the 3.9 million Syrians currently living in refuge could begin the process of returning to Syria.

- **Increase humanitarian commitments to the Syrian people**. Despite the soaring needs in Syria, only 57 per cent of crisis appeals by United Nations agencies are funded. The funding shortfall is forcing organizations like the World Food Programme to downsize their services to refugee populations in need. This is unacceptable The world must act with greater urgency to meet the growing needs of Syrian civilians, whether they reside inside or outside of Syria. The Third International Pledging Conference for Syria, to be held in Kuwait City on 31 March, provides an opportunity to do so. It is vital that members of the Security Council contribute generously.

- **Ensure accountability** by referring the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. All those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity must be held accountable. A referral to the Court would deter future war crimes and bring justice to victims across Syria.

It is time to end the conflict in Syria. Together, we can. Existing Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 2118 (2013) and 2209 (2015), provide the legal basis by which to do so. It is vital that they be enforced. Through the Council's collective action, 2015 can mark the year in which the crisis in Syria ended and the aspirations of the Syrian revolution are realized.

(*Signed*) Najib **Ghadbian**
Special Representative of the Syrian National Coalition
to the United Nations